



Weelam Group Newsletter

April 2020



Dear Weelam group, These are unprecedented times; we are all experiencing many unknowns as coronavirus has become the new way of being for all of us. I have been teaching for 40 years and have never before started a newsletter with these words. During this time of social distancing, spending time away from friends and more time at home there have been many unexpected and unplanned changes for all of us, going about our daily lives and following what we knew as our typical routines has been challenged in so many ways. These changes have been required and have been necessary for everyone to be safe as we have all come to understand the importance of these requirements so we can reduce the spread of the virus within our communities. I have been reflecting on how there are many ways we can view and make sense of what is happening within these daily changes and challenges to our lives. Before we took a break for term one holidays I shared this photo and words with you. I would now like to remind everyone of this words and wisdom from a child again. This story about the Sun and the clouds made from discoveries in nature was created as a group at Bush camp on the last day of term together.



“This is the Sun. When the clouds look down they will still be able to see the Sun”.

Unfortunately, there are no definite answers or advice I can offer you about the decisions you are being asked to make as a family at present. Please know you are not alone, we are all trying to make sense of what is happening and what we should all do during this time. In this newsletter I would just like to share some of my thoughts about what I have been reflecting on so far. I have been thinking about how as adults we make many choices about what to do, often they are not easy and the choices we make maybe ones that we cannot always explain easily. Our children are watching us as we make these decisions, we are their role models and they are looking towards us for the knowledge and understanding about how they could be feeling and acting as changes happen and choices are made, then change again. The children are living through these times with us; they are continuing to learn in many ways. This a time when with your support they can learn about what ‘change’ may mean, how they can react, what they can do and what perspectives they could take. To learn that in *times of clouds we may have to look in other places for the Sun*. As a teacher I intentionally plan experiences within the program and for times that support children to understand that changes can happen at times, that things don’t always work out as planned and that you can be ok when these times happen and when something is different. Learning to live with change is an important life skill for all our children to learn along with learning how they can view changes as ok. Supporting children to manage disappointments and come to understand that sometimes their families make decisions that are different from what they would typically do can help our children to know that it can still be alright; just different. We are all during lots of things differently at present, this will not be forever, it is just what we need to do at the moment. From speaking with everyone coronavirus has also allowed for many new opportunities and times for families to emerge. As everyone has been staying at home more I have been hearing about how this time has created new experiences, new memories for everyone and you have all found other ways to be share special times together. This is happening in our preschool program too.



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Learning and Living with nature

We have begun term two with the goal that all our relationships built with the children and their families in our groups throughout term one should continue, we acknowledge that they may just take on many different forms. I have been communicating with all families through phone calls, texts, social distancing through the fence, at the door and this week through Zoom. I have been researching and listening to many experts about what the impact of coronavirus might be for the young children living through this time. One message that I have strongly connected with was the question we as teachers were asked "what memories will young children take with them as they grow and into adulthood about this time in their life; to ask ourselves how will they look back on this time?". I encourage you think about this, how your child will remember this time. How will they remember the virus? It has been very special to receive all your all messages and photos from your children at home. I can see there are many special moments and connections being made for the children. Memories made as you have offered them time to be creative, camp in their backyards, sit around a fire, jump in puddles and share their discoveries. At preschool we are aiming to create memories, to offer everyone ways that can they could support children to understand what is happening as well as connect with each other. Our aim is to offer opportunities for the children to remember this time with some positive memories and understand the feelings and actions that support them to still feel everything is OK.

Taking responsibility for a Bulb: offering support to understand time, patience and waiting.

At the end of term one we were all in a time when we were very unsure about what was going to happen next and how long we would be away from each other, we were challenged to know how to explain this to young children. This is why we created the Bulb project. The Bulb project became a symbol that the changes happening may be with us for an extended length of time, the bulbs reflected another cycle in our lives, a time in which we may need to be patient, to wait, to care for everyone and to care for everything. First we bought out all bulbs at Bunnings, then the children and team planted over 100 bulbs into individual pots and placed them on our 'Kinder on the Bench' space for everyone to collect. All the bulbs have found homes and being cared for by the children. Our thought is that hopefully by the time they flower we will all be back together again. Please send in your photos now they are starting to shoot.



The friendship Fence: The Flag stories of Care and sharing feelings about being OK.

Thank you to everyone who has put their flag up on our friendship fence, your messages of what makes them feel OK and how we can care for others are very thoughtful and everyone is taking time to create such unique and beautiful flags. It is wonderful to read all the messages and to see the special symbols each child has added to their flag. Feel free to come by, add your flag and read the messages whenever you can. Keep watching for more ideas we have to support the children to think about how they can care, to create and share acts of kindness towards others.



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The time of Manameet / Autumn: We have all been noticing the changes in the weather and within our environment. The rain has created puddles for jumping in, areas of mud for playing in, beautiful rainbows in the sky and opportunities to see how fungi grow. As you are out on your family walks and bike rides look down to see what is growing on the ground, look again next time you go by to see what has happened to them and wonder how big they will be. We are now encouraging everyone to now look for fungi in other places. As you walk around remember to look up and on, what can you see? I look forward to hearing about your discoveries, seeing your pictures about the fungi you found and feel free to create your own stories.



Being together in many ways: Term two has begun, the preschool looks different, we have different routines and we added new practices to ensure that everyone who is joining us feels safe and OK to be at preschool when their families decide it is time for them to return. We have made many changes to the preschool to comply with all the social distancing requirements and to create a 'bubble' where the children who are joining us can explore, connect with us and engage in experiences. These changes have included a new drop off and pick up space, temperature checks, additional cleaning routines and exploring many new ways to communicate with all of the group including the team members that are working from home. This week we set up a zoom time for the group. It was great to see everyone's faces and to be able to sing the Boon Wurrung song together and to share the mushroom in the rain story with everyone. Betina taught everyone some words in sign language as we sung to Bananas in Pyjamas. We will now work on our IT skills a little more and plan for these group sessions once a week. I am also going to make a more informal time available each week for the children just to zoom in to tell me their stories. At this time they can join in for a few minutes or as long as they like, they might like to tell me about what they are doing, show me their pictures, talk with others, listen to their stories or just watch and wave to their friends. Our plan is to send out frequent emails please look for the zoom links and join us whenever you would like to. Let me know if you have any other ideas.



Please keep in touch everyone, be kind to yourself, acknowledge these are unusual times and we are all doing the best we can. Remember if what we are creating for the children are memories of a time when we all slowed down, just went on walks and bike rides, times when we shared special moments with each other, created fun times, stayed connected with each other in other ways and were there to support each other, then we are helping them to grow. We all look forward to seeing you (at preschool or virtually) and chatting again soon. Please let me know if you have any questions, thoughts and ideas we can share with each other. Thank you for all your kind words too, Ann and the team.



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Balnarring Preschool & Infant Welfare Association



Learning and Living with nature

Inspired by Willaura Primary School
What every teacher wants their families to know
Remember you are your child's first teacher...

You don't need to replicate the preschool experience.
Don't try to be your child's teacher.
Just keep being the teacher you ALREADY are.
We trained for years to teach the way we do, just as
you have trained for years to teach the way you do...
Read with your child.
Cook with your child.
Garden with your child.
Enjoy nature with your child.
Make and create things with your child.
Sing and dance with your child.
Hug your child.
PLAY with your child.
And above all, keep being the kind, calm role-model
your child needs through this challenging time.
This is how you teach.
Keep doing you.
Your child is learning from you every day



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